

The Second Beast (Revelation 13:11-18)

Introduction

I am sure that you have seen, either in a television show or a film, the “Good Cop Bad Cop” routine. The routine usually goes as follows:

The suspect is brought into a room for questioning where there is a table and a solitary chair. The blinds are closed both over the windows looking in and the door is shut and locked. The bad cop goes first and his approach is outright aggression. He may physically attack the suspect in one way or another and ruthlessly demand answers that will help their investigation. Just as things are heating up, the “good cop” comes to the rescue of the suspect and almost sounds like he is on his side! He apologizes for the actions of his colleague but confesses that he’ll not be able to hold him off for much longer and seeks to do a deal with the suspect. A kind of: “If you give me what I’m after; I’ll give you what you’re after!” Various films will mix the “Good Cop, Bad Cop” routine up a bit so that sometimes the aggressive approach wins and other times the more manipulative approach wins. The reality is however *that even though the two cops have two completely different approaches, they work for the same team and are after the same thing.*

If the Dragon was the police department and the suspect was the church then the first beast would be the bad cop and the second beast would be the good cop. They both work for the same team (The Dragon) and they both want the same thing: *For Christians to turn their back on their allegiance to Jesus Christ and their faithfulness to the gospel.* The first beast is pure aggression whereas the second beast has more tricks up its sleeve and is more sophisticated.

We have noted that the big message of Revelation 12-13 is the opposition to the people of God in the form of a counterfeit trinity. These two beasts are methods that Satan himself uses to thwart the church during this entire church age. The first beast from the sea is a symbol for any and every state/government/kingdom oppression of the church by claiming titles for itself that are worthy only of Christ. Those that do not coincide get thrown into prison or even killed. For the original hearers, the first beast was the Roman Empire. This second beast comes from the earth. Thus the origins of the two beasts harkens back to 12:12 where John writes “Woe to the earth and the sea for the devil has come down to you in great wrath”. Elsewhere the NT refers to Satan as the *god of this world*.

As you see this second beast is busier than the first beast; so let us observe the tactics of this second beast, ultimately controlled by Satan himself.

False Teaching (v11)

We read that this beast has two horns like a lamb. Why two? If you remember, chapter 11 introduced us to *two witnesses* which were also the *two olive trees and the two lampstands*. These two witnesses were *prophesying*. Do you remember the OT background? The imagery is from Zechariah chapter 4 where the Lord gives the prophet Zechariah a vision of a lampstand with a bowl on top of it with two olive trees at either side of it. Olive trees grow olives which in turn produce olive oil. Zechariah asks God what this vision meant and God’s answer was this:

Not by might, nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts

At the end of the vision God identifies the two olive trees as his two anointed ones, which were Zerubbabel, the kingly leader and Joshua the High Priest. The picture was this:

God was going to empower his priest and his king to enable the people to do the work of the Lord despite the opposition

However under the New Covenant, *all of God's people are kings and priests* meaning the two witnesses are a symbolic picture of the church preaching in the power of the spirit. The number *two* is associated with speaking. However, this beast might *look like* a lamb but is it speaking the same message as the church? No, it speaks like a dragon. If the first beast is primarily about opposition *outside* the church; the second beast is about *deception within the church*. Later on in Revelation, the second beast is going to be referred to as "The false Prophet" (16:13; 19:20; 20:10)

This is not new in the NT. John was there that day Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount and what did Jesus warn?

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves." –
Matthew 7:15

Instead of the imagery of sheep and wolf, John uses Lamb and Dragon to keep consistent with the images of chapters 5 and 12.

Do you see the subtly here? This false teaching is not immediately easy to identify if you simply look at the person(s) that is delivering the teaching. Outwardly they can look "Christ-like" but the content of their message is in line with the dragon. This is why it is so important to be discerning. False teaching does not only exist in new age shops but on the shelves of Christian bookstores.

Do you remember the one off sermon we did back in August on walking under the Lordship of Christ in Colossians 2? In that passage Paul warns the believers about things that threaten us from walking under the Lordship of Christ. Listen to what he says in v8.

See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.

The two sources of this philosophy and vain deceit are *humanity* (remember this!) and "elemental spirits" which is a reference to *demons*. This is exactly what John is trying to communicate here in the second beast.

We had read 2 Corinthians 11 during the service and in that passage Paul says two things that are helpful in cross-referencing with this passage:

1. He was afraid that as the devil deceived Eve, that the church was being led away from a sincere and pure devotion of Christ
2. He says that Satan's means is to disguise himself as an angel of light

Revelation 13:11 is something that can be confirmed from a plethora of other places in the NT. This is one of the tactics of this second beast.

Before we look at the second tactic, v12 reveals something we need to be aware of. It states that this beast operates "in the presence of", or better still, "on behalf of" the first beast. Which means this: *if, the first beast is a reality that exists during the entirety of this church age then the same is true of the second beast.* Furthermore, the mark of the beast is not something we are still awaiting for but is something that has always been a reality and continues to be.

Counterfeit Miracles (v13-14)

V13-14 describes the fact that alongside false teaching is even the performance of signs. The fire coming down from heaven alludes to the work of Elijah on Mount Carmel. If you recall, on Mount Carmel, fire coming down from heaven was to identify Yahweh as the true God above Baal. What Elijah did was not a model. In that instance Baal could not perform any signs but that does not mean other false religions and believes are incapable of doing so.

It is clear from these verses that manifestations of the supernatural are in and of themselves inconclusive as to the source of power. In the book of Acts the early church came across magicians who could perform great signs and even exorcists who themselves were not even converted!

In the 1980's there was a famous faith healer who was exposed as a sham. His name was Peter Popov. He seemed to be the real deal as he pointed to people in the large auditoriums, told them their names and their conditions, brought them up (or came to them) and did the whole "in the name of Jesus" business and declared them healed. It seemed he was on a personal phone with the one who had all knowledge; and indeed he was. A news reporter noted how Popov had a hearing aid (which is quite strange for a faith healer). A news team subsequently brought with them a radio frequency tracker and discovered that the hearing aid was an ear piece using a radio frequency as Popov was in communication with his wife out the back. She had prayer cards that she was reading from where the persons name, their seat number and the details of their ailment were written down.

Although these were false miracles, it is this idea of deception that John is describing here; something Jesus also spoke of in Matthew 24.

The Worship of False gods (v12, 15)

Ultimately this beast is seeking the inhabitants of the earth to worship the first beast. The verses allude back to Daniel's 3 friends who were forced to bow down to the image of Nebuchadnezzar. When they refused they were sentenced to death. Remember: What is the first beast? It is state/government/kingdom control that tries to take the place of Christ as it relates to allegiance and worship. However, the beast is actually much more than that. As John will return to the beast again in

chapter 17 he is going to give more information as to what the beast is all about. It is not simply about political power and control; but *materialism, immorality & pleasure*. Ultimately, the rules that governments make and the structures governments put in place will shape and effect culture at large.

What is the purpose of the second beast? To *give breath to the image of the first beast*; that is, to cause something that has no true life and power to look like it does not have life and power. It is to ascribe life and hope to a dead thing – an idol. In the first century this would have been an image of Caesar that Christians would be forced to bow down to; for us it is the *stuff* in shop windows or the internet or in catalogues - things that are dead in and of themselves but somehow we attribute to having some sort of life in. The next time you look at something and say: “If only I had that, then life would be better”, you have been duped by the second beast, who is breathing life into the beast before your eyes causing you to see and functionally worship something other than Christ.

GK Beale says this:

“Because of the transtemporal nature of chapter 13 seen so far, the ‘image’ transcends narrow reference only to an idol of Caesar and includes any substitute for the truth of God in any age.”

Again, we read of the consequences of not worshipping the beast in v15, with a reference to being *slain*. This is not the first time we have read of this:

- In 2:13 we read of a Christian called Antipas who was killed. It was the place where Satan’s *throne* was. i.e. an area of influence that clearly manifested itself in some sort of idol worship
- In 6:9 John saw the vision of Christian martyrs who were *slain* because of their allegiance to the word of God and the witness they had borne.
- The witnesses were killed by the beast for their message (11:7)
- Those who do not worship the beast were slain with the sword (13:10)

However, death is not the only result as v16-18 reveals another tactic:

Coercion & isolation (v16-18)

We read that this beast causes people, regardless of their status in society, to receive a mark on their right hand or forehead. This mark, we are told is the *name of the beast* and the purpose of the mark is to enable economic dealings. Before we deal with that latter statement, notice *where* the beast marks these people. Is this the first time we have seen this in Revelation? Is it any coincidence that the very next vision that John sees is this:

Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

Do you remember back in chapter 7 the sealing of the 144,000 (12x12x1000), which was a symbol for the people of God from both the OT and NT, or those whose name has been written in the book of life (13:8)? We noted that the word for *seal* is used by John in his gospel where Christ says the father had

set his seal upon him. Was Jesus walking around with a literal seal on his forehead saying *messiah*? No; God's seal was manifesting itself in the teaching and life of Christ identifying himself as the divine son and messiah. When this word is used in the NT it is used to speak of God's *ownership of his people*, so Paul can write this:

But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." - 2 Tim 2:19

It speaks of ownership. Indeed, John is borrowing from the ancient practice of slavery where slave owners would mark out their slaves with their own personal name or number on their right hand or forehead!

Elsewhere in the NT, what is identified with the seal of God in the lives of his people? *The giving of the Holy Spirit!* What is the second beast a counterfeit of? *The work of the Holy Spirit!* If God's mark is not literal; then what are the chances that this mark is also not literal???

What John shows us here is that ultimately there are two marks and two groups of people:

God's people

- Marked by God with his name (7:4; 14:1)
- Follow the lamb (14:4)
- Face the wrath of the Beast (13:10, 15)

The Beasts People

- Marked by the Beast with its name (13:16)
- Follow the Beast (13:3)
- Face the Wrath of God (9:4; 14:9)

But what about the buying and selling? Do you remember the context of the early churches and the trade guilds? The trade guilds controlled many of the cities. If you wanted to work you had to join a trade guild and every trade guild worshipped some sort of deity. The meetings of these trade guilds were characterized by two things: Firstly, the eating of meat sacrificed to the deities followed by illicit sexual activity in a response of worship to the deities. Furthermore, the coins used for trading involved the image of the Roman Emperor with titles of deity on it. Christians would refuse to use such coinage since it was blasphemy, resulting in not being able to buy and sell. This *meant something* to the original hearers.

There is a principle involved here: *The people of God lose out economically because they refuse to acknowledge the false teaching and worldview of the second beast and thus worship the first beast.* Do you not think we see this today?

- The Muslim that works with his father and is converted gets kicked out of his family, society and work and thus loses out economically because he no longer pays allegiance to the beast.

- The Christian nurse who gets fined or even loses her job because she wears a cross that is offensive to people
- The Christian B&B owners who get a knock on the door for lodgers who end up being homosexuals and they refuse them get front page headlines, get sued along with 10,000 pounds of solicitor fees and end up losing trade because they are backward, narrow minded bigots. They lose out economically because they do not bow down to the beast
- Chic Fil A – a Christian owned fast food restaurant in America. The owner was once asked in an interview that their views were on gay marriage; they told them they did not agree and a mass boycott was called from the LGBT community. Lose out economically.
- Asher's bakery?

Currently the Mayor of Houston, who is a lesbian, has pushed through laws forcing pastors to be asked to hand over their preaching material at any moment when asked and if it is found to be discriminative of any persons they can be imprisoned.

Do you see in these examples how a false worldview combines with stately authority? This is what is happening here. For the original hearers the second beast was the Roman Imperial cult that forced worship of the state.

What is this second beast?

The Second beast is any religious, spiritual, psychological and emotional worldview that teaches and practices anything that is contrary to God's word, and causes people to worship anything and anyone but Christ

But what about v18? The passage ends with a call for wisdom to calculate the number of the beast. Notice it is a call for *wisdom*; i.e. spiritual wisdom. It is not a call for intellect. The reason why this is not a math riddle to be cracked is because that would mean *anyone* could crack it regardless of they were a Christian or not. This can only be found out by the people of God. Please however note this: If God knows all things, does it make sense that he would ask Christians in the first century to crack a code and identify a person who, even 2000 years later is not on the scene yet? That is disingenuous!

In the original, there is no definite article connected with the word *man* so that it is usually translated as "a man". The word for man *anthropos*, can refer to a *male man* but actually is used for more often in the NT in a generic form as *mankind*. In fact, that is the primary use of the word so that actually this verse could be translated:

"It is the number of man" or "the number of humanity"

It is the same word used in Colossians 2:8 when it speaks of philosophy according to *human tradition* (*man's tradition*). In other words, what this verse calls for is for the Christians in every age to look out in their culture, to humanity and discern where these things manifest themselves:

- Where do we see false teaching in humanity?
- Where do we see Counterfeit miracles in humanity?
- Where do we see Christians being coerced and forced within humanity?

I have done that throughout the sermon. But what about the number 666? Do you remember the big message of chapters 12-13? It is a *counterfeit trinity*. The Dragon, the Beast and the False Prophet, form an unholy trinity and they manifest themselves *within humanity*.

What is the most important number in Revelation? It is the number *seven*; the number of spiritual fullness or completeness

- God the father is mentioned as sitting on the throne 7 times in this book
- The lamb has 7 horns. The name "Christ" appears 7 times in the book
- The spirit is referred to as the *seven spirits*

Thus we have a triune God who is made up of 777. This counterfeit trinity is only 666. What is that? It is the *falling short of seven*, because all have fallen short of the glory of God.

Instead of reading 666 and being freaked out; celebrate the fact that you are loved, owned and empowered by 777 to be able to overcome for greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world! What this text ultimately tells us is that the church will be built, the kingdom will extend and the nations will be reached with the gospel and there is nothing this false trinity can do to ultimately stop it.